

RENEGADE £24.99

Gods

Hello, and welcome to *Night Thoughts*, the program in which Andy Hutchinson asks the question, is man one of God's blunders or is God one of man's blunders? We're also asking Friedrich Nietzsche to review the latest Bitmap Brothers game and asking him who invented liquid soap and why

This immortality business – you can't live with it and you can't live forever without it. Why anyone would want to witness the earth's endless devolution is quite beyond me, but hey, there's no accounting for taste.

Those immortal chaps up there on Mount Olympus have thrown down a challenge. You see, they've got this playground city which is chock-a-block with labyrinths and monsters and there's nobody to

test it out. So what could be better than trying to lure some foolhardy human into its winding passages and crumbling caverns. If this human manages to complete the four areas of the gods' city then he becomes immortal. Guess what? You're that lucky human.

Gods is a platform game. You take on the role of the cocky mortal who has to battle through four levels, with each level covering three worlds. To complete

each world you need to solve some tricky puzzles while keeping the underworld monsters at bay.

The balance of the game is evenly divided between testing your shooting, jumping and puzzle solving skills. You progress up and down platforms by jumping or falling, or by using a ladder. It may take a bit of brain strain to negotiate all the right platforms, though.

Every world has a main problem to solve. This might be simply a case of getting a key and taking it to a door, or collecting pieces of a mosaic and re-assembling them in the right order. The very first world on level

one enables you to get to grips with the control system. There are two easy puzzles to complete before you receive your bonus and reach world two. Here, things get slightly trickier



■ Oh dear, oh dear. This poor old bat monster certainly doesn't have the power, but you could – with Dower-Gen and the aid of a certain nimble-footed shop-keeper called Groz the grocer

– you have to set simple switches in the right order, or you end up missing out on power-ups and money.

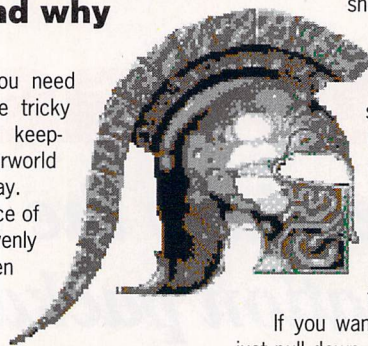
There are zillions of inventive monsters in the city, and some of them are much smarter than you.

They can fire intelligently, dodge shots – even steal all of your gear. Every time you destroy an attack wave of monsters, they leave either a gem, some money or a power-up behind. Collect the gems and money and you can swap them for weapons or health in the shop.

If you want to pick up an item, just pull down on the joystick until an inventory window appears. Then you simply select a free slot (there are four in all) and press the Fire button. You're now holding the item. There are also keys to collect. You can use these later on when you come across the appropriate door.

Seven times in each level you encounter the shop-keeper. His shop is well-stocked, providing you have plenty of money to spend. If your health is low you can tweak or completely replenish it – but obviously the latter function is considerably more expensive.

More powerful weapons are also very expensive. These include axes,



“Nation 12 composed the title music and it's absolutely brillig”

GODLIKE HELP FROM ON HIGH

Not only does *Gods* feature artificial intelligence that reacts to how you're doing, but those cunning Bitmap Brothers have also included some very cunning little shortcuts – very helpful if you can suss them out in time!



■ On level one, world one, you can save yourself a lot of time and hassle. When you flick this switch to open the door, just push it back up again...



Now you can just flick the switch to destroy the post and get the key. When you've done that, return to the switch and flick it back up again...



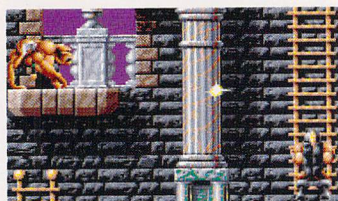
This results in the stone beneath you moving away to reveal one of those handy shortcuts. Now you can just walk over the teleport stone...



And you're transported almost instantly to another part of the level. You've saved yourself a lot of time and effort, not to mention vital energy!



■ On the first level of this innovative platform game there are two right hard biped monsters guarding your exit from the level. Wonder what that concealed switch at the top left does? Think about it...

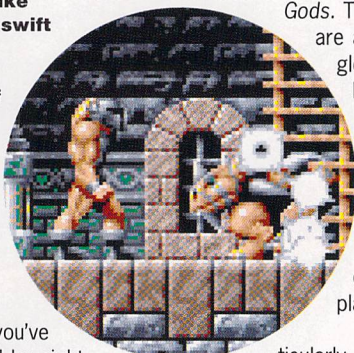


■ **Same old story.** There you are, hanging off a ladder, when some monster gobs an intelligent bullet your way. You have nothing to save you but your Terylene undies and a big smile

spears and even a "familiar" little chap – he follows you around and saves you from backstabbing monsters. In addition, you can improve your weapon's strength – increase its area of effect, for example, and you get wide angle shots.

If your health is looking a bit weedy, then you can buy some food, which restores it a little bit. Buy a heart and you soon find your energy back up to full strength. This can be

■ **These horse-like geezers need a swift dose of the old electro-axe.** Then they're off to the Shergar Retirement Home for Failed Computer Game Creatures



very handy if you've just been mugged by eight aggressive gargoyles.

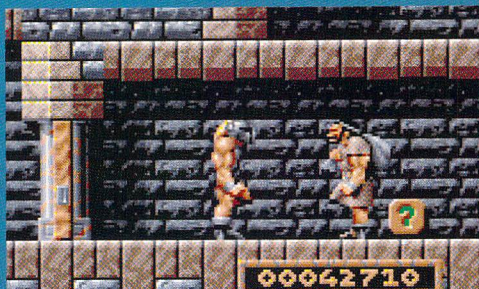
The monsters you encounter in the city are either lone fighters or members of a large squadron. The lone fighters are usually the most vicious. In the earlier levels it doesn't take much to kill the monsters, but later on you're going to need some brutal weaponry and a good dose of jumping skills to get the better of these chaps.

At the end of each level you come across a large and very hard guardian. It takes more than a few hits with the old axe and fireball combination to lay waste to this geezer. You find he has some nasty tricks up his reptilian sleeve, so a swift trip to



■ **Yep, loads of pottery.** Not really surprising when you realise you're in a pottery. Walk to the left and a key drops on your head (perfect for those less than sober evenings when you couldn't find one any other way)

NEVER MIND THE PRICE, LOOK AT THE RANGE



■ **Mr Hero walked into the shop from Number 52 Festive Gardens.** Then, as if by magic, a shopkeeper appeared. "Hello" said Mr Hero. "Good afternoon, sir," said the shopkeeper in fluent Tuareg, "the usual, I assume?"



■ **Mr Shopkeeper displayed his wares.** "Very fine too," said Mr Hero, gazing in admiration at the impressive display of weapons, potions and Tuareg prayer rugs, "but where is the astronaut's outfit I ordered three weeks ago?"

the friendly neighbourhood 7-11 is definitely in order.

EFFECTS

As usual, the Bitmaps have used a particularly good graphic artist for Gods. The Greek backdrops are all suitably ancient – gloomy underground, but bright and airy above. There are some excellent touches too. You can see the shade of the sky changing through the windows as you're playing, for example.

The sprites are particularly attractive. None of this "three pixels for his head, Roger" business – you can actually tell what these guys look like. The hero warrior you control is large and very well animated, although he is prone to the odd bit of levitation on platform edges.

Animation and scrolling are fast and smooth. There's little noticeable loss of speed when a lot is happening on-screen

and you certainly don't have to wait for the screen to update every time you take a high dive off a nasty ledge.

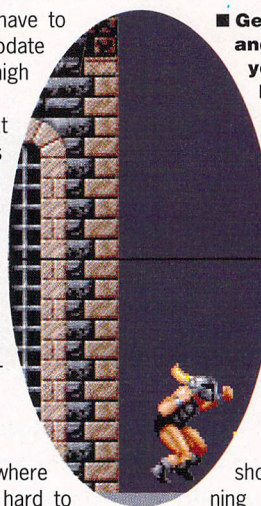
Gods is a treat aurally. The title music is absolutely brilliant. Nation 12 from the Rhythm King label composed it specially and it makes a pleasant change from your average run-of-the-mill game tune. In-game sound effects are inventive and unobtrusive.

VERDICT

It's getting to the point where you have to look really hard to find anything wrong with a Bitmap Brothers game – they consistently come up with the goods. There are a couple of slightly annoying features here – you can't grab a ladder while you're falling past it, for instance, and occasionally you can even float in mid-air. Then again, if that's all that's wrong with the game then it can't be all bad.

One of the best features of Gods is its

■ **Get a bit too cheeky and you plummet to your death off a high ledge. The view on the way down is quite nice, though**



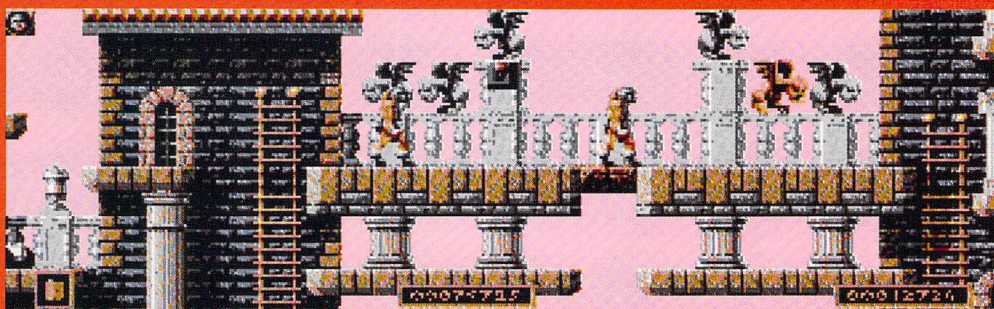
artificial intelligence. If you're doing really badly it drops a health heart on your head or makes the monsters a soft touch. Whatever your skills, the game caters for them automatically.

This is no mindless shoot-'em-up – it's a cunning combination of platformers, puzzles and bloody-minded aliens. The Bitmaps might be the Stock, Aitken and Waterman of the ST world to some, but you'd be nuts not to love this one.

ANDY HUTCHINSON

GRAPHICS	9
SOUNDTRACK	8
INTELLIGENCE	9
INSTANT APPEAL	8
LONG TERM INTEREST	9
OVERALL	92%

BRUSH YOUR TEETH 'N' GARGOYLE EVERY DAY



■ **Look, I told you not to go strolling around like that on top of Notre Dame.** On the night of the Summer Solstice, anything can happen...

There, what did I tell you? It's happened, all right. Those blimmin' gargoyles have come to life – sounds like a great plot for a game...